

"I'M HURRIED, CHILD."

"Oh, mother, look! I've found a butterfly hanging upon a leaf. Do tell me why there was no butter! Oh, do see its wings! I never, never saw such pretty things—All streaked and striped with blue and brown and gold."

"Where is its home when all the days are cold?"

"Yes, yes," she said in absent accents, "I'm hurried, child!"

"Last night my dolly quite forgot her prayers."

"And when she thought you had gone down stairs."

"Then dolly was afraid an' so I said: 'Just don't you mind, but say 'em in the bed.'"

"Because I think that God is just as near. When dolls are 'traid do you s'pose he can hear?"

"The mother spoke from out the ruffles piled."

"I'm hurried, child!"

"Oh, come and see the flowers in the sky—The sun has left, and went you, by and by. Dear mother, take me in your arms and tell."

"Me all about the pussy in the well?"

"Then tell me about the babies in the wood?"

"And then, perhaps, about Red Riding Hood?"

"Too much to do! Hush, hush, you drive me wild."

"I'm hurried, child!"

"The little one grew very quiet now. And grieved and puzzled was the childish brow."

"And then it queried: 'Mother, do you know?'"

"The reason 'cause you must be hurried so? I guess the hours are little or than I."

"So I will take my pennies and will buy a big clock! Oh, big as it can be, for you and me!"

"The mother now has leisure infinite; She sits with folded hands, and face as white."

"As winter. In her heart is winter's chill. She sits at leisure, questioning God's will."

"My child has ceased to breathe and all is night!"

"Is heaven so dark that thou dost grudge my light?"

"O life! O God! I must discover why The time drags by."

"O mothers, sweet, if cares must ever fall, Pray do not make them stones to build a wall."

"Between these and thine own, and miss thy right."

"To blessedness, so swift to take its flight! While answering baby questionings you are But entertaining angels unaware."

"The richest gifts are gathered by the way For darkest day."

—Selected.

COMMON MRS. BROWN.

BY MRS. HARRIET A. CHEEVER.

Perhaps it was some excuse that when I first met Mrs. Brown I was young and inexperienced and so fell into the common error of basing my too hasty opinions on mere outward appearance. But most of the members of Dr. Plume's society were high-bred, intelligent persons, such as one becomes accustomed to meeting in our New England church circles, and it was especially agreeable finding the same congenial people in a new and distant home.

Mrs. Christopher Summerton particularly attracted me with her well selected language, careful pronunciation and elegant appearance; even the fit of her gloves carried a suggestion of the fine instincts and fastidious habits of one who feels at home only in the best of attire; and her manners were in keeping with all the rest, sufficiently vivacious in company and beautifully devoted at church. And knowing her to be quite select in her choice of associates, it was always with a little thrill of satisfaction that at various entertainments where we chanced to meet, I would hear her low, insinuating remark:

"I am so glad to meet you again; I see but few of my acquaintances present this evening."

Then, Mrs. Harrington Prince was so nice. She was tall, stately and possessed of very winning manners, and she had a hand which might have served for a sculptor's model. Once, while sewing at a church circle, some one alluded to her graceful fingers, and she replied with what I thought charming indifference, "Yes, we all have the richly hand." Then Mrs. Summerton who sat next me, said that Mrs. Prince belonged to one of the oldest families of the place. Her great grandmother had been a richly, and away back for generations they had all had those delicate, dainty hands. To my unsophisticated mind it seemed to carry with it a certain degree of prestige, possessing hands whose fineness and shape were so faultless that they could have known no contact with anything like toil for no knowing how many generations back.

But Mrs. Hanson Brown,—such an ordinary name compared with those other two,—was a widow in very good circumstances financially, who always presented herself at church social, fair or reception, "dressed to kill," as my John once inelegantly but expressively remarked. Mrs. Brown's voice was too loud for a person considered cultured, and she had a nervous way of fingering her watch-chain when talking, or else slipping one of her jeweled rings over her large fingers; motions not at all in keeping with the quiet ease of your finished lady. So when Mrs. Summerton once alluded to "that common Mrs. Brown," I thought she had named her just right, although I hoped she had not divined another thought which might have betrayed itself in my eyes, for she added in her softly modulated voice, "But I forgot myself

in allowing criticism to escape me in company."

Yet with all her commonness, whenever I engaged in conversation with Mrs. Brown, I was vaguely conscious of a something about her not altogether unpleasant. Just what this was it would not have been easy to have explained, but perhaps it might be described most nearly by saying it seemed like a suggestion of an underlying, and entirely different kind of character, or nature, than that which she carried on the surface. And I was one evening suddenly surprised to notice how perfectly shapely were her large white hands; those nervous, restless hands, forever at their ceaseless toying with watch-chain or ring, making one wish she had with her some kind of work with which to employ them.

Mrs. Brown was a member of Dr. Plume's church, and was rarely ever absent from any of its services. Sundays, morning and evening, at Tuesday and Friday evening meetings of prayer, Mrs. Brown was sure to be in her place. Mrs. Summerton and Mrs. Prince frequently had other engagements to interfere with such regular attendance. So, alas! had I.

One memorable summer, John proposed taking me to the mountains for a month's delightful tarry. Of course he could not remain with me all the time, but I thought nothing could exceed the completeness of the arrangements, if he must return to business a part of the time, when I found that Mrs. Summerton and Mrs. Prince were expecting to be guests at the same hotel as ourselves, for perhaps the same length of time.

The first week of my stay was perfectly delightful; then John went back to the city for a week or ten days' stay, and the very day he went away Mrs. Prince came to me, a shade of vexation on her fair face, as she said: "Who do you think has arrived?"

As I could not guess, she said, quoting Mrs. Summerton's expression:

"Why, that common Mrs. Brown!"

"Too bad," I said, "but, then we need not have so very much to say to her, perhaps."

"Oh, yes, she'll be sure to force herself upon us," replied the lady; "and as we are of the same church, I suppose we must treat her civilly."

But despite a quite infrequent obligation to face Mrs. Brown, the time passed very pleasantly, and I found the increasing intimacy of my fashionable new friends exceedingly agreeable. Two or three days, however, after John's departure, I awoke one morning with a strange pain in my side, and a curious stricture about the breathing organs entirely new to me. At noon a doctor was summoned and John telegraphed for. There was nothing at all contagious in my case, but the suffering was great and protracted. John came promptly as possible, and for a week watched me almost incessantly, day and night. Then my kind husband fell ill through sheer exhaustion, and the doctor grew desperate in unavailing efforts to find some one to sit with me, particularly at night.

Two nurses whom John sent for to the city were unable to come, and at last the doctor, at John's suggestions—I would never have permitted it had I been consulted,—begged first Mrs. Summerton, then Mrs. Prince, to share one night's watch with me. But Mrs. Summerton declared herself unable to endure the air of a sick room one hour at a time, and Mrs. Prince said it made her so distressed and nervous to think of my lying there so ill that she was preparing to go away the next day.

"There's no danger of infection," said the doctor, bluntly, "that you need fear to see your friend, or fly away from the house she is in," but excuses in abundance were at their soft tongues' end, perfectly plausible at least to themselves.

But the doctor told John afterward that, passing through the hall a little later, he heard one of those low-voiced women say to the other:

"The richly hands were never formed for nursing nor handling the sick."

"And to save my life," added the brusque doctor, "I couldn't help blurring out, 'Then God pity you, madam, if no hands formed for nursing or handling the sick can be found when comes the time of need!'"

Something of the dearth of aid in my hour of extremity reached me, despite the efforts made to conceal it, and in my weakness and pain I wondered if I was to die for want of proper care and watching, with a houseful of people about me.

I did not know nor care how it came about, but just at nightfall of that day, Mrs. Brown glided into the room exactly as if she belonged there; and with every nerve unstrung and on the quiver, I watched her every movement.

What subtle transformation was this! She wore a soft gray wrapper,

very grateful to my straining eyes. In walking she made no effort to tip-toe about, reminding me of my critical condition, yet her alighted feet made no sound as she crossed and recrossed the room. At first she avoided looking at me: then she came to the side of the bed and—'it wasn't 'culture' nor affectation, but it was the sisterly sympathy and loving kindness of the Christian that made her voice beautifully low and sweet as she said cheerily:

"Why, we don't look so very sick, after all; I imagine, however, there will be no harm in a little rubbing." The soothing power of these great, soft hands! Shall I ever forget how tirelessly they ministered to my needs, how gently they eased the cruel pain, as night after night their welcome touch brought gradual relief? And my vanished acquaintances of a summer's day had called that woman, "common," while it was my lips had said, "we need not have much to say to her."

Convalescence came tardily; many of the guests had left the house since my illness began, but still Mrs. Brown lingered. One night, when a peremptory call from the city had taken John away for a day or two, I took one of these great, tender hands in both my little wasted ones, and trying to control my penitent, tearful voice, I asked:

"How did you learn to know a sufferer's needs so completely? And why did you come to me? And why have you stayed by me so faithfully?"

There was nothing "common" in a single line of the dear face, which flushed and worked with emotion for only a moment, then with wonderful self-control my friend began:

"My little dear, I am probably not so very much in advance of yourself in years, but I am old, old, in the school of suffering and pain. I have had parents, sisters, husband and child, and buried them, every one. I endured it all with what trust and womanliness I could, until that child, my boy, the last of them all, left me, then my heart broke. I won't weary you with an account of what I passed through before I learned to endure with anything like patience. The world will hear you moan and sigh, and pity you a little while; then it will weary of your plaint. Secclusion can be borne with safety a brief space, then it grows dangerous. There is nothing on God's earth will cure a broken heart. All that will help it is work, and the religion of Christ."

"But the kind of work this involves grows to be a true heart's ease in time. It means sympathy and aid for any and all of God's creatures who need your help. It means mingling with other people, no matter how hard to do so at first. It means depending for strength, like a feeble child, on the strong arm of the Almighty. But relief is so slow! I often raise my voice in company to keep down the crying hunger in my soul. I wear jewelry to have something to grasp at, to cheat myself into forgetfulness of my emptied hands. I wear clothing I feel ill at ease in because I will not force mourning upon the attention of others. I haunt the house of God, because it's the only place on earth where I really feel contented, and I suppose I sometimes appear queer, common, perhaps, in my efforts to hide my grief from unsympathizing eyes."

This was years ago. To-day, a sunny-faced woman whom my children call "Auntie Brown," is almost as much at home in our nursery as I am. To say I love her as a sister, is hardly to express the depth of affection with which I regard her. The "slow relief" is doing its work effectually. And I learned years ago that those whom we, in our short-sightedness, often call "finished," are sadly lacking in these qualities which in God's sight go towards making the true man or woman.

Patriarch hands may in the sight of a just God be utterly unworthy of being regarded as even "clean hands." And the judgment of the world is not worth the breath expended in expressing it often times, but a broken and a contrite heart, our Father in heaven will not despise.—Interior.

HOME FIRST.

"Let home stand first before all other things! No matter how high your ambition may transcend its duties, no matter how far your talents or your influence may reach beyond its doors, before everything else build up a true home! Be not its slave; be its minister! Let it not be enough that it is swept and garnished, that its silver is brilliant, that its food is delicious, but feed the love in it, feed the truth in it, feed thought and aspiration, feed all charity and gentleness in it. Then from its walls shall come forth the true woman and true man, who shall together rule and bless the land." Is this an impossible ideal? No, it is a true ideal. It is the only ideal that will give us a true home. It is the only ideal that will give us a true man and a true woman. It is the only ideal that will give us a true family. It is the only ideal that will give us a true nation. It is the only ideal that will give us a true world.

think not. What honor can be greater than to found such a home? What dignity higher than to reign its undisputed honored mistress? What is the ability to speak from a public platform to large, intelligent audiences, or the wisdom that may command a seat on the judge's bench, compared to that which can insure and preside over a true home, that husband and children "rise and call her blessed?" To be the guiding star, the ruling spirit in such a position is higher honor than to rule an empire.—Mrs. Beecher.

DYING IN THE LORD.—Frances Ridley Havergal, during her last illness, while suffering intensely from a high fever, in sweet submission said, "God's will is delicious; he makes no mistakes." Bidding one of her physicians good bye, she asked, "Do you really think I am going?" He answered, "Yea." "To-day?" she inquired. "Probably," was the reply. Then she exclaimed, "Beautiful! too good to be true!" and looking up with a smile, added, "Splendid! to be so near the gates of heaven!" Later, as the time of her departure came, she nestled down into the pillows, folded her arms upon her breast, saying, "There—it is all over! Blessed rest!" Her countenance became radiant with the glory seemingly breaking in upon her soul, and those who watched her thought she appeared as if conversing with the King in his beauty. She tried to sing, but after one sweet note her voice failed, and she was gone to be with her Lord.

RANDOM READINGS.

Self-preservation is the first law of nature; self-sacrifice the highest rule of grace.

Truth is as impossible to be soiled by an outward touch as the sunbeam.—Milton.

One man's word is no man's word. We should quietly hear both sides.—Goethe.

Gratitude to a covenant God makes even a temporal blessing a taste of heaven.

Moderation is the silken string running through the pearl chain of all virtue.—Bishop Hall.

A believer's comfort in living is to live to Christ; and in dying it is that he shall go to Christ.

Give what you have. To some one it may be better than you dare to think.—Longfellow.

Wickedness may prosper for awhile, but at the long run he that sets all knaves at work will pay them.

If clouds begin to darken the light of hope, drop deeper the anchor of faith. There is always rock below for those who trust in the Lord.

Reflection is an angel who every day bears reports to heaven of doings here, and when the books are opened we must answer for the record kept.—Huxlitt.

Such is the effect of refinement and affability of manners when blended with intelligence and virtue, that prepossessions are at once enlisted in favor of those who are so pre-eminently endowed.

There is such a difference between coming out of sorrow, merely thankful for relief, and coming out of sorrow full of sympathy with and trust in him who has released us.—Phillips Brooks.

In the deepest night of sorrow God gives us so much to be thankful for that we can never cease our singing. With all our wisdom and foresight, we can take a lesson in gladness and gratitude from the happy bird that sings all night as if the day were not long enough to tell its joy.—Coleridge.

The threads of a spider's web are very fine, but the spider, by weaving them around and around its victim, often captures and destroys insects larger than itself. It is so with little sins; if repeated again and again, they become a habit, and are like fetters to bind the soul.

The members of a "nervous," high-mettled family fretted and snarled at another habitually until one of the circle was stricken with disease, and then the love that was deep in every heart came out. The fretting and snarling was only a habit. The love was real. Ah, that habit! Put it away from you before a vacant chair reminds you that one of the circle will hear your voice no more.

David spoke from a long and severe experience when he said, "It is better to trust in the Lord than to put confidence in man." The Psalmist had tried princes and found them wanting, and he declares, "It is better to trust in the Lord than to put confidence in princes." Such is not an uncommon conclusion. Let us remember the fact that the Lord is our Father, our Friend, our Helper, our Comforter, our Strength, our Refuge, our Fortress, our Tower of Defense, our Rock of Ages, our Foundation, our Cornerstone, our Head, our King, our Lord, our God, our Father, our Friend, our Helper, our Comforter, our Strength, our Refuge, our Fortress, our Tower of Defense, our Rock of Ages, our Foundation, our Cornerstone, our Head, our King, our Lord, our God.

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